



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



LOWER BRULE SIOUX RESERVATION DECLARED PURPLE HEART CITY

Tribal leaders, government leaders, business leaders, veterans, and tribal members gathered at Lower Brule this week for a declaration ceremony. Lower Brule Sioux Reservation was declared "Purple Heart City."

Their proclamation read: "Whereas, the people of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe have great admiration and the utmost gratitude for all the men and women who have selflessly served their country and their community. The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe appreciates the sacrifices that the Purple Heart recipients have made in defending our freedoms."

As part of the ceremony, Tribal Council members displayed the Purple Heart Reservation, Combat Wounded, and Veteran Parking signs that will be throughout the community.

Department of the Dakotas Commander Ken Teunissen spoke to the group and thanked the tribal leadership for their support of this endeavor and their support of our veterans.



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RECOGNITION OF VIETNAM VETERANS

Kudos and a big “SHOUT OUT” to all our County and Tribal VSOs, Veterans Service Organizations and VA partners that hosted special designated events to honor our Vietnam Veterans. These events give us all new empathy, a new understanding, a new way of thinking for what these men and women lived through.

These events increase public awareness and appreciation of the service, courage, and sacrifices service personnel made during the war, why America got involved in the war and the importance of supporting troops the country has put in harm's way.



DOUGLAS COUNTY VSO

Fred Kuil, Douglas County Veterans Service Officer, has developed a display case for war memorabilia. Fred changes the display monthly. The display includes: medals, ribbons, uniforms, hats, helmets, weapons, flags, photographs, maps, journals, canteens, letters, postcards, etc.

These displays are a great way to honor the men and women who proudly served their country and to help transfer family history from one generation to the next. The displays are also a great way to share our heroes stories with families and communities. They are part of the process by which the nation that sent its soldiers to fight can stumble toward an understanding of what their sacrifices mean.



NEW VA CONTRACT AWARD FOR VA CLINIC IN PIERRE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System awarded a contract to STG International, Inc. (STGi) to provide Primary Care services to veterans in a contractor owned and operated community clinic in Pierre. The clinic will continue to operate in its current location of 1601 North Harrison in Pierre for the short term. More information to come on the location.

Veterans will transition to their care under the new management beginning April 1, 2019. There will be no change or interruption in medical services or access to medical records. STGi will oversee a seamless transition of clinic operations. The contractor is focused on providing a well-designed, accessible facility that ensures the delivery of safe, quality health care for veterans.

Veterans and their families are invited to attend a Town Hall on April 18th from 2:00 pm to 4:00pm at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Pierre. STGi and VA leaders will provide information and take questions about the care and services available through the clinic.

The Pierre Community Based Outpatient Clinic is part of the VA Black Hills Health Care System which provides patient-centered care to over 19,000 veterans living in a five-state region. If you are a veteran and would like to learn more about your eligibility for health care, please call Patient Services at 1-800-743-1070.

MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

Midwest Honor Flight has one mission confirmed for May 7, 2019, and two pending missions tentatively scheduled for September 24 and October 12.

Veterans, guardians and volunteers can learn more about the program by visiting: <https://www.midwesthonorflight.org/>. Click on apply and scroll down.



**MIDWEST
HONOR FLIGHT**

Upcoming Mission	Flight Date
Mission 4: Confirmed	07 MAY 2019
Mission 5: Pending Funding	24 SEP 2019
Mission 6: Tentative	12 OCT 2019

APRIL IS NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY MONTH

Celebrate National Social Security Month and see what you can do online at [SocialSecurity.gov](https://www.SocialSecurity.gov).

Need to check the status of your pending Social Security application? All you need to do is sign up for a my Social Security account! See everything you can do with a my Social Security account: <http://ow.ly/ugez30nS2lR> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

Want to sign up for direct deposit with Social Security? Need to change your direct deposit information? You can do it all with your personal my Social Security account! Learn more now: <http://ow.ly/iAvl30nS2Mm> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

Receiving benefits and need to update your current address? Update your address online with your personal #mysocialsecurity account: <http://ow.ly/DHxa30nS2Ss> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

#DYK You can request a #SocialSecurity replacement card online with your personal my Social Security account? Sign up today: <http://ow.ly/efdO30nS2UU> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

If you need to provide proof of benefits, it is simple. Get a benefit verification letter online with your #mySocialSecurity account: <http://ow.ly/i8g530nS32M> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

Get a copy of your #SocialSecurity 1099 (SSA-1099) tax form with your personal #mySocialSecurity account: <http://ow.ly/uglJ30nS3bX> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

How secure is your financial future? Get the planning tools you need from Social Security: <http://ow.ly/fySY30nS2La> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

Do you plan to retire on your own terms? Get your plan started with Social Security's free online tools: <http://ow.ly/fySY30nS2La> #NationalSocialSecurityMonth.

April is National Social Security Month



Securing today and tomorrow

See what you can do with a *my* Social Security account.

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CAREGIVER AND SURVIVOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORWARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie commended the Veterans' Family, Caregiver and Survivor Federal Advisory Committee on March 27 for recommendations that will assist in the department meeting its commitment to improve the experiences of all those it serves.

The committee, chaired by former U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, a noted advocate for military caregivers, offered cross-cutting recommendations addressing several areas that affect veterans' families, caregivers and survivors.

The recommendations range from an effort to identify all federal programs available to veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors, to increased coordination in resource distribution to those who require them most, as well as implementation of the expansion of caregiver stipends with more standardization.

"The VA is not only listening to our veterans, but more intentionally to the voices of their families, caregivers and survivors," Wilkie said. "Thanks to the valuable work of this committee, we are understanding and taking action on their concerns and needs as we improve the delivery of care, benefits and services. The committee's recommendations are vital to the VA as we meet our customer service mission."

The VA's 2018 accomplishments on behalf of veterans, families, caregivers and survivors include the following:

- Establishment of the Center of Excellence for Veteran and Caregiver Research.
- Creation of the Veteran Family Community Engagement Directorate.
- Distribution of the specific "quick start guides" for caregivers and survivors as part of the national Welcome Kit.

The committee advises VA's Secretary, through the Chief Veterans Experience Officer, on matters related to veterans' families, caregivers and survivors across all generations. A key element of the committee's work is to engage veteran family members, research experts and family service providers to better understand their needs and identify ways the VA can provide them with a positive experience in their use of care, benefits and services.

Learn more about the VA's support to veterans' families, caregivers and survivors through the [VA Welcome Kit](#), which includes a "quick start guide" for caregivers.

Get started with Caregiver Benefits

This guide will help caregivers of Veterans access support at VA that may include caregiver education and training, mental health services, peer support, access to health care benefits, financial assistance, and respite care.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

ChooseVA

VA CONTINUES COMMUNITY SUICIDE-PREVENTION CHALLENGE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) convened seven teams March 27-29 in Arlington, Virginia, for the Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families.

With the goal of eliminating suicide by promoting a comprehensive public health approach that empowers communities to take action, the sites that participated in the mayor's challenge policy academy were: Clarksville, TN; Kansas City, MO; Oklahoma City, OK; Mecklenburg County, NC; Tulsa, OK; Reno/Truckee Meadows, NV; and Suffolk County, NY.

Suicide is a major public health concern that affects everyone. It is estimated 45,000 Americans, including 6,000 veterans, die by suicide each year.

"The mayor's challenge provides a roadmap for how communities can contribute to the national effort of preventing veteran suicide," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "We are pleased to continue our partnership with SAMHSA, so we can provide suicide-prevention training and support to the communities where veterans live, work, and thrive."

At the policy academy, representatives from the sites developed strategic action plans to implement in their communities. The collaborative teams included community, municipal, and military stakeholders, among others. VA and SAMHSA provided technical assistance to support local efforts, document outcomes and share strategies with other municipalities.

The Mayor's Challenge was launched in March 2018, bringing together representatives of eight cities to develop local action plans to prevent veteran suicide. Since then, the Mayor's Challenge program has expanded to a total of 24 cities. An inaugural Governor's Challenge that involved seven state teams took place in February, replicating the effort on the state level. Participants in both programs form interagency teams to bolster veteran suicide-prevention efforts in their communities.

To learn more about the efforts of VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, visit https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention. For information on SAMHSA's suicide prevention efforts, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention/samhsas-efforts>.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can contact the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

SD GUARD FAMILY READINESS GROUP RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

For the sixth time in seven years, the Department of Defense awarded a South Dakota Army National Guard unit with the Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs presented the Rapid City-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment with the award for 2018 at the Pentagon, March 29. The annual award is presented to one unit from each of the seven reserve components that demonstrate excellence in engaging with and supporting their members' families. Units represented come from the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and the Coast Guard Reserve.

The award recognizes the top unit Family Readiness Groups with the best programs that support new and impactful ways to connect with families – especially while a unit is preparing to deploy, on deployment, and after they return home.

Charlie Company deployed to the Middle East from September 2017-October 2018 and provided rapid response medical evacuations throughout the Middle East. Before the deployment, the FRG ensured that volunteer orientation and training was completed for key unit leadership, and support services were in place. During the deployment, many different forms of communication were utilized to keep the families connected including: FRG phone tree, e-mail and mailing lists, monthly newsletters, weekly email updates, and monthly meetings. After the deployment, the FRG provided the Yellow Ribbon post-mobilization event with childcare and multiple fun activities for the children

Past winners include: the 153rd Engineer Battalion (2017); the 155th Engineer Company (2015); the 1742nd Transportation Company (2014); the 235th Military Police Company (2013); and the 842nd Engineer Company (2012).



UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 6—State MOPH Convention—Rapid City DAV (101 E. Madison Street) - 1:00 pm (MT)
Apr 4—Vietnam Veterans Honoring Ceremony—Yankton VFW (209 Cedar Terrace) - 3:30 pm (CT)
April 12—Purple Up for Military Kids
Apr 13—Boots to Business Reboot—Zeal Center of Entrepreneurship (2328 N. Career Ave.) - Sioux Falls—8:30 am—4:30 pm (CT)
Apr 18—VABHCS Town Hall—Ramkota Hotel (920 W. Sioux Avenue)—Pierre 2:00 pm (CT)
Apr 19—State Offices Closed
Apr 20—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Apr 22—State Offices Closed
May 7—MidWest Honor Flight Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—7:45 pm (CT)
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—TREA (1981 Centre Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am—3:00 pm (MT)
May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
May 9—SDDVA Mini Conference—VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
May 14—Bill Casper's Annual WW II Luncheon—TREA—Rapid City
May 17—Veterans Honor Concert—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)
May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls
May 18—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
May 27—MJFSVH Memorial Day Car Show—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)
Jun 6-9—American Legion State Convention—Sioux Falls Convention Center
Jun 13-16—VFW State Convention—Dakota State University—Madison
Jun 15—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 17—South Dakota Veterans Council—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL
Jul 20—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 3-6—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 17—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 29—Veterans Day at the Fair
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School
Sep 21—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)



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